

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

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State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**SUMMER WHOOPING COUGH CASES POINT TO NEED FOR WIDER VACCINATION**

**PENSACOLA, FL** – The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County (FDOH-Escambia) has noted a cluster of pertussis cases in our community. Pertussis, commonly known as “whooping cough,” is a vaccine-preventable illness, but can be highly contagious to non-vaccinated and under-vaccinated individuals. Pertussis can be especially dangerous to newborn infants who are too young to get vaccinated. This illness is also serious for people with weakened immune systems and for older adults.

The disease easily spreads within families and in other settings where there are close contacts among individuals, such as summer day camps and group child care situations. “At this point in 2015, we have four confirmed cases, two of which were confirmed this week,” said FDOH-Escambia’s Director, Dr. John Lanza. “The two newest cases live in the same household, emphasizing the ease with which the disease is transmitted among closely-contacted individuals. Because pertussis can be so dangerous for infants, it is important that all medically-eligible individuals get vaccinated and stay vaccinated.”

Individuals aged six weeks and older are eligible for the pertussis vaccine. Many teens and adults were vaccinated for pertussis when they were a child. However, if there is going to be a newborn in their home, or if they are going to be around older adults or individuals with poor immune function, previously-vaccinated persons may need a vaccine booster. Individuals should talk with their physician about getting the vaccination. Vaccinations are available at FDOH-Escambia and from many private physicians.

Pertussis is very contagious and is spread from person to person through the droplets from a cough. The main symptom is a cough that lasts for two weeks to several months. The cough can be very serious. Individuals may be unable to catch their breath and begin to turn blue. Severe coughs can also lead to vomiting, sleep loss, weight loss, nose bleeds, rib fractures, hernia and even pneumonia. In infants, the cough may have a “whoop” sound at the end. Individuals who have these symptoms, and those who have a cough and have been exposed to someone who has been diagnosed with pertussis, should see a doctor. Additional information about the disease, what infected individuals should do, and vaccination recommendations can be found at [EscambiaHealth.com](http://EscambiaHealth.com).

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The Florida Department of Health works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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